NEWS

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Lovingood considers solar moratorium Supervisor invites public comments, emails

During the past several years, commercial solar projects have been quietly earmarked for some of the High Desert's most scenic rural neighborhoods, according to First District Supervisor Robert Lovingood.

"Residents from Oak Hills to unincorporated Apple Valley and from Helendale to Newberry Springs are very concerned about how solar projects blight the rural character of their neighborhoods," Lovingood said.

So the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors will consider a moratorium on commercial solar projects in unincorporated San Bernardino County during a public meeting in June. Lovingood is inviting residents to weigh in via email or to speak in person during the public hearing in San Bernardino. (The meeting will also include discussion of the county 2013-14 budget.)

In the past few years numerous commercial solar projects have been approved without much attention in unincorporated areas of the county. Currently approximately 30 solar projects within the First District are in the county pipeline. Together, they cover 22,400 acres – the equivalent of 35 square miles. (For a list of projects, <u>click here</u>).

Notices to immediate neighbors of solar projects were not always clear and rarely set off alarms. The county Planning Commission originally approved the projects in keeping with county standards. Residents say in some cases, projects were later significantly enlarged without careful scrutiny or adequate communication to the community. Construction is now starting on some of the projects. Residents are expressing concerns about impacts to their property values from dust,

blight, reflected light and visual impact of panels, which in some cases may reach 30 feet or more into the sky.

The proposed solar moratorium would allow the County to adequately plan for these projects and to incorporate a renewable energy component into its General Plan, which will be addressed later this summer.

The solar moratorium proposal will be discussed at the San Bernardino Government Center, 385 N. Arrowhead Avenue in San Bernardino. For questions regarding the meeting, please contact Don Holland at (760) 995-8100. Email comments should be sent to both the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors at COB@sbcounty.gov and to SupervisorLovingood@sbcounty.gov.